

editorial opinion

'Take another look at Detroit'

Let's hear a great big yawn for the old argument that commuters shouldn't pay the Detroit income tax because it's "taxation without representation."

Let's also hear the sound of slumber when Detroiters say they're providing all sorts of services suburbanites use but don't pay for.

For the truth is that there are lots of services which suburbanites subsidize for Detroit, and lots of things Detroit does that benefit the entire region. Money flows across municipal boundaries so often and so fast that it's almost impossible to keep track of it.

Detroit's Main Library is a state resource, maintained by one municipality. But the Friends of the Library report that half of their 2,600 members are suburbanites. Score one apiece.

The Art Institute in Detroit is in a class by itself, even with all the facilities of Cranbrook and

the universities considered. It's a city facility. Yet this season, for the first time in months, all galleries are open because the state appropriated \$685,000 for the Art Institute and repealed a plan (which never took effect) to require a \$1 admission fee. Our suburban lawmakers all supported it. Score one for everybody.

The entire problem is far from resolved. It's a fair question whether a Detroit-run institute serving an entire region is properly financed when the state occasionally kicks in. Is the state donation enough or too much? Shouldn't some more rational financial system be found?

THE DETROIT Symphony gets some kind of city support. Yet it would go under without the private fund-raising and ticket-buying done by suburbanites. Score another for everyone.

Ditto with the Detroit Concert Band, which operates through the city's parks and recreation de-

partment but freely solicits suburbanites for donations and record purchases.

Detroit operates its own prison system, and DeHoCo accepts women prisoners from courts all over the state. The state reimburses Detroit for the service—but not enough, it is alleged. Score one for Detroit for providing the service. Take away one from Detroit for performing a function that should be a state responsibility.

DETROIT PATROLS its own freeways, with no reimbursement from the state, whereas freeways in most of the rest of the state are patrolled by the state police. Detroit wants reimbursement, though the logical solution is for the city to get out of the freeway-patrolling business.

There must be a dozen other examples of legitimate Detroit and suburban gripes. Add them up and they tend to cancel out.



Where folks can get individual attention

Via the Rev. Robert Marshall, some of these suburbs made their way into the world record book over the weekend.

Marshall, who is minister of the Birmingham Unitarian Church in Bloomfield Hills, broke into the Guinness Book of World Records last Saturday at 12:32 p.m. when he stepped down from the lectern after 61 hours of nonstop preaching.

Our reporter who covered the event noted that even at the end of his ordeal, Marshall seemed in good shape, energetically giving quotes to the media people who flocked around. At 55, he must be one of the very few world record holders who had penetrated into the ranks of advanced middle age at the time their record was set.

In addition, it appears that Marshall overshot his goal by 10 hours. A typographical error in a (non-local) newspaper had given the previous world preaching mark as 60 hours 25 minutes, when in fact it was 50 hours 25 minutes.

All in all, it was a remarkable performance by a remarkable man.

I REMEMBER Bob Marshall from my childhood days, when he ran a place called Bob Marshall's Book Shop on State Street in Ann Arbor.

For about 20 years, it was far and away the best book store in a town filled with good ones. It had a broad and diverse stock, solid both in scholarly volumes and best sellers, together with prints and other arts material.

But most important, the shop was a friendly place, where you felt like an individual rather than a walking invoice. There was a wood fire in the fireplace during the cold months, and there were easy chairs scattered around and a chess

Observation Point

by PHILIP H. POWER



board or two. There was a sign on the wall: "Browsers Welcome."

And there was Bob, wandering around, treating his customers like people, being helpful and friendly.

THINKING ABOUT Bob and his new record leads to musing about people and their motivations.

After it was all over, Marshall said it was pleasant to get the event into the record book, but that was "less than the really great satisfaction of rapport, relationship and revival" developed among his congregation during the preaching.

Fair enough, as long as priorities are being assigned and values weighed. But certainly no individual is going to stay up for more than 60 hours, much less preach during that time, without the goal of attaining thereby some particular significance. In the case of Marshall, that significance extended from him to his congregation and in turn was the means by which the "rapport, relationship and revival" that the minister noted were achieved.

And it is that signification or individuation—the

carving out of a particular set of singularities attached to an individual, a family, or even a community—that is so much needed in today's ever-growing, over-populated world.

Today, the Birmingham Unitarian Church has a little more individuation than it had last week, as a result of Marshall's feat, just as does the Birmingham-Bloomfield community.

IT IS IN this context that the real importance of continuing to have separate, free-standing suburban communities within this metropolitan area takes on great meaning.



BOB MARSHALL
Suburbia's Individual

It is argued, powerfully and plausibly, that what we need is a regional government; it would reduce duplication, cost less, be more efficient, enable intelligent planning, and generally produce rational decisions.

All this is probably true. But people in the suburbs don't want it.

And they don't want it not because of bigotry. Rather it's because a regional government threatens to swallow up the individuation of each suburban community, thereby threatening to hack away yet another chunk of each resident's own singularity.

In an important and complex way, we relate ourselves to the community in which we live. We take pride in its accomplishments, snort at its failures, cast our daily lives around its peculiarities. And in so doing, we gain a sense of our own roots and define ourselves a little more clearly from the mass around us.

And in a real and important way, the Rev. Robert Marshall was contributing to that process as he broke the record last week.

Congratulations, Bob, and enjoy your good night's sleep.

Some movement on public transit

The vacancy was open one day short of a year, but Gov. Milliken finally filled the opening on the board of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority.

The SEMTA post will go to Thomas B. Adams, of Bloomfield Hills. A native of Detroit and graduate of Wayne State University, Adams is chairman of the board of Campbell-Ewald Co. in Detroit. He served on the WSU board and earned several impressive medals as a naval aviator.

The post had been vacant since the AFL-CIO's Bill Marshall resigned at the beginning of 1975. While Adams is a good choice—with both a Detroit and suburban background—it's true the SEMTA board has been heavy with Detroit and Birmingham-area points of view. Western Wayne County has been left out of SEMTA's public transportation policymaking apparatus.

This could be rectified by the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), which makes a total of six appointments to the SEMTA board compared to the governor's three.

Unfortunately, SEMCOG's general assembly is scheduled to meet until mid-March to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Prof. Allen Hyman of Southeastern Michigan State University. Hyman was called to the post of president of the general assembly to make the appointment.

Why the rush? The SEMTA board needs leadership. It needs to campaign for legislative enactment of a tax scheme to build rapid transit facilities. It needs to lobby for federal aid to remedy the erroneous notion that Detroit's Mayor Coleman Young is in charge of public transportation in this region.

Congratulations to Tom Adams on his newest opportunity for public service. As a leading and man, he may provide the kind of aggressive prodding the cause of public transportation needs.

Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

Eccentricities

by HANK HOGAN



If OSHA boys got to skiing...

I started fantasizing the other day about what would happen to skiers if the same guys who have been writing the safety regulations for the auto industry and the OSHA boys who are writing the safety regulations for factories got together to take the risk out of the downhill sport.

The skier now has safety straps to keep his skin from leaving his body and recklessly going down the hill without him in case he falls, and safety bindings which supposedly unhook when he falls down, but he is not insulated at all from the impact of touching the ground at a high rate of speed.

The safety boys would have to design some sort of air cushioned ski suit to absorb the impact when the skier has trouble standing up as he is going down.

THE SKIER HIMSELF would have to be outfitted with a horn so that he could warn other skiers of his presence. But, of course, the horn could not be so loud as to force the skier to wear ear muffs.

To protect the health of the skier, ski boots and mittens would have to be heated to prevent frostbite and special masks designed to protect the face in the event that the skier fell.

The skier would also have to wear some sort of football-type helmet to protect the back of his head and some sort of leather jacket and kidney belt to minimize damage when falling.

SKI BOOTS would have to be redesigned because a high ankle support has a tendency to make a fracture worse if a skier has trouble, yet a low boot would not give the support necessary. Possibly the new ski boot would have to be designed to go above the knees to eliminate the risk of damage.

Ski goggles would have to be made with safety glass because the present plastic lenses could split and damage the eye.

Ski outfits would have to be designed in a uniform safety color so that they are easily visible on the hill. Ski equipment itself would have to be redesigned. There is no way the skiers would be allowed to use ski poles with pointed ends. The hand strap on ski poles would have to be of the break-away variety, in case they ever caught on trees.

THE POINTS would have to be eliminated from skis, and some sort of energy-absorbing bumper would have to be designed to go across the front.

Signs would have to be posted on the top of each hill, warning skiers about trees and other objects on the downhill course.

I can picture the ski lift. Several things would have to be changed. First, seat belts would have to be installed on chair lifts and safety netting would have to be installed under each chair lift in case a person fell out of the chair.

All chairs would have to be padded in such a way that if they came in contact with a skier going less than five miles an hour there would be no injury to either the skier or the chair.

Of course, adequate fences would have to be installed to guard against people coming in contact with the chair lift.

THEY WOULD HAVE to eliminate rope tows because those are moving straps, which under OSHA rules, would have to be completely guarded.

T-bars would have to be outlawed because they could cause irreparable damage to an individual if the skier happened to place the bar in the wrong place. J-bars would be even more unlawful.

Bright yellow stripes would have to be painted on the hills to keep the skiers away from prohibited objects such as trees and buildings and bushes, rocks and other skiers.

The ski patrol would not be permitted to use toboggans to pick up injured skiers because they lack a separate braking system.

When it was all over, I wouldn't be surprised to find that skiing, itself, would become outlawed because of the inherent safety hazards.

College, school tears need to be taken with salt

There's no question about it: The recession has hurt nearly everyone; those who say they're suffering are probably telling the truth.

The point, however, is that we're all in the same boat. It's hard to shed more tears for one special interest than another. It is wise to take with several grains of salt the complaint of anyone who says he's facing significantly more hardship than somebody else.

School people, in particular, are adept at voluble lamentations. Two recent cases come to mind.

THE SOUTHEAST Michigan Community College President's group called a show at the Detroit Press Club to say that state aid cuts to their programs were "grossly inequitable as compared to other segments" of education.

But Schoolcraft President C. Nelson Grote, the chairman, and Oakland Community College VP Wally Nikkels and their brethren (there were no sisters) were guilty of some statistical sleight-of-hand as they attempted to prove they were gashed more than the four-year colleges.

By counting money the Legislature never voted them, they came to the conclusion that they had suffered a 7.5 per cent cut compared to only two per cent for the four-year colleges. Television newsmen, basically handsome idlers, fell for that line and broadcast the misstatement as photographed.

What the community college folks didn't say is that they were comparing apples and oranges. The cuts were in state aid, which amounts to only 34 to 39 per cent of their total revenues. You have to remember that community colleges have a stable base of property taxes that the four-year colleges lack.

A four-year college such as the University of Michigan gets something like 61 per cent of its general fund operating revenues from the state. Therefore, any state aid cut of one per cent is

more drastic with the four year schools than with the community colleges.

WHEN YOU GET through all the financial machinations, it turns out that the community colleges suffered only a 2.5 per cent total revenue cut—not the 7.5 per cent figure that was so carelessly thrown around.

Now, 2.5 per cent hurts, but it's not the end of the world.

What Gov. Milliken attempted to do was cut total budgets about the same everywhere. Thus, some institutions got bigger state aid cuts than others. It doesn't follow that community colleges were treated unfairly—quite the opposite.

AS THIS IS written, school officials from 40 districts, including some from this area, are meeting to decide what to do about an attorney general's opinion they didn't like.

It seems the Hon. Frank Kelley upheld the governor's budget cuts of categorical aid—the kind of aid that pays for special state-ordered programs. The school officials are looking for legal flaws and are reportedly (yawn) considering a lawsuit.

They would be much better off if they started paring their budgets, the sooner the better. Sure, they're hurting. Sure, it's too bad the state ordered special programs and then has to cut their funding.

The point, to repeat, is that everyone is hurting in this recession. It's hard to work up an extra flow of tears for any one group. Our community college and school folks should cut out the crying contests and get on with business on whatever money they've got.

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